

PEOPLE - MARSTON



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Contemporary Authors

Elsa Marston

1933-

Nationality: American**Ethnicity:** AngloSaxon**Year of Birth:** 1933**Place of Birth:** Newton, MA**Table of Contents:**

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Personal Information: Family: Born March 18, 1933, in Newton, MA; daughter of Everett Carter (a professor of English) and Harriet (Peirce) Marston; married Iliya Harik (a professor of political science), July 25, 1959; children: Ramsay, Amahl, Raif. *Ethnicity:* "Anglo-Saxon." Education: Attended Vassar College, 1950-52; University of Iowa, B.A., 1954; Radcliffe College, M.A., 1957; attended American University of Beirut, 1957-59; Indiana University, M.S., 1980. Politics: Democrat. Memberships: National Society of Arts and Letters, Authors Guild, Society of Children's Book Writers, Nature Conservancy. Addresses: Home: 1926 Dexter St., Bloomington, IN 47401.

Education: New Entry : 03/03/2000

Career: American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon, instructor in English, 1959; Pig Industry Development Authority, London, England, secretary, 1959-60; American Society for Public Administration, Chicago, IL, editor and liaison, 1960-63; free-lance writer, 1983--; instructor, Institute of Children's Literature, 1985-89. Artist, with exhibitions in Tunisia, 1975, and New York, 1979. President of cooperative nursery school, 1976-77; coordinator of local jail improvement committee and director of local art gallery, both 1980-81.

Award(s):

Illinois Wesleyan Writers' Conference, short story award, 1983; Society of Children's Book Writers, Oklahoma chapter contest, young-adult short story, 1989;

- *Highlights* historical article award, 1991; *Highlights for Children* fiction contest winner, 1992, and

International Reading Association, Paul A. Witty Short Story Award, 1994, both for "The Olive Tree"; New York Public Library '97 Books for the Teen Age Friends of American Writers, runner-up award for juvenile fiction, 1997.

WRITINGS BY THE AUTHOR:

FICTION

- *The Cliffs of Cairo* (juvenile novel), Beaufort Book Co. (New York City), 1981, new edition, Hoopoe Books, 1998.
- *How to Be a Helper* (juvenile short stories), Doubleday (Garden City, NJ), 1982.
- *Cynthia and the Runaway Gazebo*, Tambourine, 1992.
- *A Griffin in the Garden*, Tambourine/Morrow (New York City), 1993.
- *Free as the Desert Wind*, Hoopoe Books, 1996.
- *The Fox Maiden*, Simon & Schuster (New York City), 1996.

NONFICTION

- *Some Artists: Their Lives, Loves, and Luck*, Cambridge Book Co. (New York City), 1983.
- *Art in Your Own Home Town*, Cambridge Book Co., 1984.
- *The Politics of Education in Colonial Algeria*, Ohio University Press (Athens, OH), 1984.
- *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (juvenile play), first produced in Bloomington, IN, 1984.
- *Mysteries in American Archaeology*, Walker (New York City), 1986.
- *The Lebanese in America*, Lerner Publications (Minneapolis, MN), 1987.
- *Lebanon: New Light in an Ancient Land*, Dillon/Macmillan (New York City), 1994.
- *The Ancient Egyptians*, Marshall Cavendish (Freeport, NY), 1995.
- (With Ramsay M. Harik) *Women in the Middle East: Tradition and Change*, Franklin Watts (New York City), 1996.
- *Muhammad of Mecca, Prophet of Islam*, Franklin Watts, 1999.

OTHER

Contributor of stories to anthologies *Join In: Multiethnic Stories for Young Adults*, Delacorte (New York City), 1993, and *Short Circuits: Thirteen Shocking Stories by Outstanding Writers for Young*

Adults, Dell (New York City), 1992. Also contributor of essays, reviews, and other articles to numerous other books.

Contributor of stories and articles to periodicals, including *Calliope*, *Cricket*, *Faces*, *Highlights for Children*, *Hopscotch*, *Modern Journal of Ancient Egypt*, and *Odyssey*, *Single Parent*, and *Writer*. Contributor of reviews to local and national publications.

Works in Progress: Several novels, including *The Shadow of the Sphinx*, and picture books; a musical play, "The Boy from the Forest."

"Sidelights"

Elsa Marston told *CA*: "I write the kinds of stories I loved as a child--about far-off places and times, myth and magic, the whole imagination-stretching world of 'what if?' I also write about the real world today, and of one particular part: the Middle East. Having lived in several countries of the Middle East and North Africa, with family ties through marriage, I am still very much a New England Yankee at heart but drawn to the history and peoples of the Arab world.

"Several of my most recent books for young readers, plus other writing projects, therefore deal with such varied topics as Ancient Egypt, Islam and the Prophet Muhammad, the lives of women in the Middle East, present-day Lebanon, archaeology in Egypt, children's literature about the Middle East, Arab-Americans, and realistic stories about contemporary Arab youth. I hope in this way to help young Americans acquire better understanding of the Middle East, present and past, and appreciate that part of the world as a place rich in positive interest--rather than as the confusion of stereotyped images still prevalent in this country.

"While I expect to continue in this cross-cultural vein, I also want to explore my own roots. For example, a novel set in 17th-century Maine is on my agenda for the near future.

"As for 'what if?' stories, I love to explore the possibilities of the impossible. A gazebo that floats out to sea . . . a mythical creature settles down in an ordinary back yard . . . a fox who changes into a beautiful girl . . . these ideas gave rise to my picture books *Cynthia and the Runaway Gazebo*, *A Griffin in the Garden*, and *The Fox Maiden*. I think that it's important for children, especially in this high-tech, fast-forward age, to develop an imaginative approach to life, seeking challenges, combinations, and resolutions within the 'givens' of the world we have.

"My writing life is simple: whenever not doing the essential to keep home and family in operation, or handling the business side of writing, or playing tennis, I'm working on my writing . . . because I'd rather do that than almost anything else, Library research is half the fun; I don't think the Internet will ever keep me out of the stacks. After a rough outline of a new story or article--I need some idea where I'm going--I compose on the word processor. Though hardly a stylist, I take pains to write well: I really do like grammar. The revision process--trying to work through the problems that pop up and incorporate new insights--brings me much greater pleasure than pain.

"For more reasons than I can mention here, I am happy to write for children. There are inevitable limitations, and very little fabulous wealth; but the opportunity I find to explore almost anything in the world that interests me--and, above all, to leave some lasting good in the lives of young people--are at the top of my list."